

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. Canceled.
2. (Currently Amended) A specimen observing method, comprising the steps of:
 irradiating a specimen supplied with a negative voltage with an electron beam to generate secondary electrons from the specimen,
 forming a negative potential field such that the secondary electrons are retarded,
 deflecting and detecting the generated retarded secondary electrons to obtain a specimen image on the basis of the detected retarded secondary electrons, and
 adjusting the negative voltage so as to cancel charge-up of the specimen.
3. (Previously Presented) A specimen observing method according to claim 2, wherein the step of adjusting the negative voltage is so performed that the specimen image has a given image contrast.
4. (Previously Presented) A specimen observing method according to claim 2, wherein the step of adjusting the voltage is performed while monitoring an output of a secondary electron detector detecting the generated secondary electrons so that the output shows a maximum.
5. (Currently Amended) A specimen observing method, comprising the steps of:
 irradiating a specimen supplied with a negative voltage with an electron beam to generate secondary electrons from the specimen,
 forming a negative potential field such that the secondary electrons are retarded,
 deflecting and detecting the generated retarded secondary electrons to obtain a specimen image on the basis of the detected retarded secondary electrons, and
 adjusting the negative voltage while monitoring an output of a secondary electron detector detecting the secondary electrons to determine a value of the negative voltage at which the output has a maximum value.

6. (Currently Amended) A scanning electron microscope which comprises:
 - an electron source emitting a primary electron beam,
 - a focusing lens focusing the primary electron beam,
 - a deflector deflecting the primary electron beam ~~toward the specimen beam~~ to irradiate a specimen with the focused primary electron beam so as to generate secondary electrons from the specimen;
 - a detector detecting the secondary electrons;
 - a negative voltage supplying source supplying the specimen and the deflector with a negative voltage such that the secondary electrons are retarded, and
 - a controller adjusting the negative voltage to determine a value thereof at which the output shows a maximum.
7. (Previously Presented) A scanning electron microscope according to claim 6, wherein the secondary electron detector comprises a secondary electron multiplier and the controller adjusts the negative voltage while monitoring an output of the secondary electron multiplier.